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APPROVAL OF UNDP ASSISTANCE TO A PROJECT OF SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

IPF:(1987-91) $10 738 000

(SYR/86/015) - Improved Management of Water Resources for Agricultural Use

Date of approval:	14 December 1987
Expected duration:	Two years
Proposed executing agency:	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
Government implementing agency:	Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform (MAAR)
Proposed UNDP contribution:	$848 000 Source of funds: IPF
Total UNDP budget:	$848 000

Project background

Expanding and improving agricultural irrigation has been a top priority among the development programmes in Syria for the last four decades. For instance, over three-quarters of the national fixed capital formation in agriculture was allocated for irrigation and land reclamation in the Five-Year National Development Plans. The main purpose has been to increase the overall efficiency of water use in agriculture, expand irrigated area. increase agricultural production, and contribute positively towards achieving self-sufficiency in the production of food.

Irrigated land in Syria comprises less than 20 percent of the total cropped area but produces about 50 percent of the crop production. However, increasing demand on food resulting from the very rapid population growth (3.6 percent annually) requires continuous expansion of irrigated area and increased efficiency of utilizing scarce water resources. Water use efficiency under traditional irrigation is relatively poor; and problems of waterlogging and salinisation are common in large areas of irrigated land. In addition, some aquifers have already been depleted or being so by over pumping. Scientific evidence suggests that over 40 percent of the currently used water in irrigation can be saved and consequently used for expanding irrigated area if more efficient methods of irrigation are applied.

In order to deal with the problems of farm-water management, the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform (MAAR), established in 1985 an Irrigation Directorate (Directorate of Water & Management - DWM). In 1987, the Government requested UNDP assistance to strengthen the newly established DWM to consolidate its programmes, and extend the results to the field.

Description of project

The immediate objectives of the project are to: (a) improve the organizational and operational aspects of the Directorate of Water Resources Management at the Ministry of

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